



# JACKSON BOULEVARD DISTRICT

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO HISTORICAL  
AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS



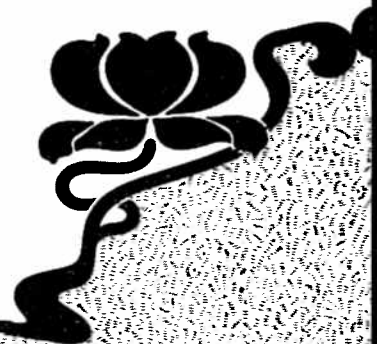
CITY OF CHICAGO  
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COMMISSION ON CHICAGO HISTORICAL  
AND ARCHITECTURAL LANDMARKS

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Printed U.S.A./February 1976  
Reprinted U.S.A./September 1979





Four generations of Jackson Boulevard residents are pictured above. From left to right are Merceita Genoar; her mother, Mrs. William A. Genoar; her grandmother, Mrs. Frederick Goldthwaite; and her great grandmother, Mrs. James Lytle. At the time the photograph was taken all four lived in the house at 1531 West Jackson which was purchased in 1903 by Frederick Goldthwaite. Miss Merceita Genoar continues to reside in the house today.

(Courtesy of Miss Merceita Genoar)

# Jackson Boulevard District

The 1500 block of West Jackson Boulevard is almost all that remains of Chicago's once fashionable Near West Side. The block was developed during the latter part of the nineteenth century, as was most of the Near West Side.

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The Jackson Boulevard District was designated a Chicago Landmark by the City Council of Chicago on November 15, 1976.



Late nineteenth-century view of the park pavilion and lake in Union Park. Located at the intersection of Washington and Ashland, this 2.2-acre park was a popular resort park for the citizens of Chicago. Its picturesque design and country-like atmosphere heightened the desirability of the surrounding area and helped to spark the residential development of the Near West Side.  
(Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)

### History

Prior to its residential use, the Near West Side was the site of several small farms and one of Chicago's earliest stockyards, Myrick's. The famous Bull's Head Tavern which served as a hostelry for the stockyards and a terminus for the Madison Avenue streetcar line stood at the corner of Madison Street and Southwestern Plank Road (now Ogden Avenue). The stockyards remained in the area until they

were moved to the Bridgeport area in the late 1850s.

In 1864, Samuel J. Walker, a real estate speculator, developed Ashland Boulevard (then Reuben Street) between Monroe and Harrison streets by widening the street, planting trees, and building six large houses on different corners. These homes were situated on large lots, giving the area a somewhat rural character. The desirability of the neighborhood was heightened by its proximity to Union Park, at that time a popular resort park located east of Ashland between Lake and Washington streets. Union Park featured a small lagoon, a bandshell for open-air concerts, and beautifully landscaped grounds that attracted Chicagoans to spend an afternoon out in the "country." Carter Henry Harrison describing a Saturday in Union Park in Caroline Kirkland's *Chicago Yesterdays* wrote:

...In Union Park of a summer Saturday afternoon, concerts were frequently given between the hours of five and seven by Voss' band...While the band played, the fashion of the neighborhood paraded in a fine array, some strolling, some driving slowly in wide open landaus, the populace in the meanwhile looking on in rapt admiration. Union Park was the Bois de Boulogne of the West Side.

Samuel J. Walker, a native of Kentucky, sold several of the homes along Ashland Boulevard to fellow Kentuckians who were living in Chicago. One of the first of these buyers was Henry H. Honore, who purchased the home on the southwest corner of Jackson and Ashland. Honore, a prominent businessman, came to Chicago from Kentucky in 1855 and played an important role in the development of Chicago's park system. His daughter Bertha later married Potter Palmer.

In 1866, Honore sold the home to Carter Henry Harrison, a fellow Kentuckian. Harrison served in Congress from 1874 to 1878 and was elected Mayor of Chicago in 1879. He served five terms as mayor and was assassinated in his home on Ashland Avenue in 1903. His family moved out the following year and the building has since been demolished.

After the Chicago Fire of 1871, Washington Street was made a boulevard extending between Halsted Street and Garfield Park, passing Union Park. This provided for the development of the Near West Side. Soon the entire length of Washington Boulevard was bordered by fine residences, many of which faced the park. Other side streets to the east of Ashland Avenue, such as Adams, Monroe, Madison, and Jackson, were soon developed. The homes along these streets were built on smaller lots than those on Ashland Avenue and the area took on a more compact, urban appearance.

Prior to the area's development after the Fire, much of it was prairie. However, in 1868, a grandstand capable of seating at least two hundred people was erected on the southern half of the block bounded by Jackson, Laflin, Van Buren, and Ashland. This grandstand was used for various events and Chicago's then traditional Fourth of July baseball games were held there.

A large portion of the 1500 block of West Jackson Boulevard was subdivided in 1873 by Matthew Laflin and Henry Loomis. Laflin was one of Chicago's earliest settlers. He



**Streetscape of the 1500 block of West Jackson Boulevard taken in 1906. At that time the entire Near West Side resembled this street.**  
 (Courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society)

Contemporary views below reveal that the block has changed very little since the turn of the century. The remainder of the Near West Side has been altered radically, however, leaving the 1500 block of West Jackson as the only block in the area east of Ashland to retain its original character.  
 (Barbara Crane, photographer)



### *Architecture of West Jackson Boulevard*

During the period between 1871 and 1900, when West Jackson Boulevard was being developed, several architectural styles were widely employed for residential construction. Elements of four of these styles—the Italianate, Queen Anne, Second Empire, and Richardsonian Romanesque—can be found in the homes on Jackson Boulevard. The homes in the district are built on narrow lots, approximately 25 feet wide, with several clusters of town houses. Only a few buildings do not share common walls with their neighbors. The buildings are all brick or masonry construction; many have mansard roofs fashioned after the Second Empire style. All were constructed with a high first-floor entrance; these high entrances were the vogue in Chicago at the time for two reasons. First, because of its proximity to the lake and its sandy soil, Chicago has a relatively high water table and any deep basement excavation introduces serious seepage problems. It was consequently best to raise basements as high as possible. Secondly, during the nineteenth century the city periodically raised the levels of its streets. Houses were constructed with first floors high above grade level so that in the event that the streets were raised, the entrances need not be changed.

Several of the homes in the district have elements of the Italianate style in their design. This style had been popular throughout the country during the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s. It is characterized by broadly projecting roof overhangs, and window and door openings (often arched) topped by ornate lintels. The earliest masonry buildings done in the Italianate style were flat fronts, which are two-story brick structures with stone or brick lintels, a cornice, and (as the name implies) a flat front facade. These structures often had common walls forming town houses. The row of three town houses at 1533-37 West Jackson has an Italianate flat front. Very soon after the flat fronts, structures with bay fronts appeared. Bay fronts quickly gained in popularity, as they admitted more light and air than the flat fronts. Bays are usually polygonal, although examples of both rectangular and curved bays do exist. The structures at 1515 and 1531 West Jackson Boulevard have Italianate bay fronts.

**This row of town houses at 1501-1509 West Jackson Boulevard was constructed in 1883. The home at 1501 was the residence of Benjamin F. Ferguson, a prominent Chicago lumberman and philanthropist.**

(Barbara Crane, photographer)



**Bay-front building at 1520 West Jackson is enriched with the ornament of the Second Empire style. Note the mansard roof with the prominent dormer window.**

(Barbara Crane, photographer)

While several flat- and bay-front buildings within the district display Italianate detail, most combine elements of the Queen Anne and Second Empire styles. The Queen Anne style developed in England in the late 1860s and was introduced into this country at the Centennial Exposition held in Philadelphia in 1876. It was used for residential construction through the end of the nineteenth century.

Queen Anne facades display a rich variety of color and texture. Brick is often contrasted with wood trim, ornamental bands of contrasting color run across the facades, and further variety is added by the use of ornamental brickwork plaques of foliate, floral, or sunburst patterns. Windows may have plate glass in their lower halves and leaded or stained glass above.



The Second Empire style developed in France during the reign of Louis Napoleon (1852-1870). In the United States, the style was employed in both residential and commercial architecture during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Facades patterned in the Second Empire style are distinguished by high mansard roofs. Dormer windows are widely employed and chimneys often feature classical details.

Perhaps the best example of the Second Empire style in the district is the structure at 1501-09 West Jackson Boulevard. This row of three two-and-a-half-story town houses was built in 1883. It features a stringcourse with an attractive grape leaf ornament between the first and second stories, a rather heavy cornice, and a high mansard roof with prominent dormers. The home at 1501 West Jackson, which has been carefully restored, was the residence of Benjamin F. Ferguson.

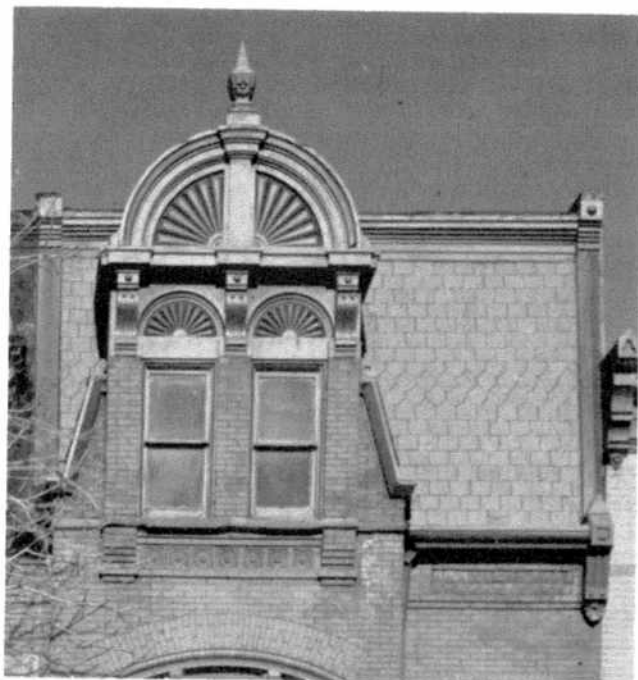
In the late 1880s, the Queen Anne and Second Empire styles gave way to the Richardsonian Romanesque style. This style derives from the work of Henry Hobson Richardson, one of the foremost American architects of the nineteenth century. Richardson developed a distinctive architectural style that employs round arches, rough-faced masonry, and slit-like window openings. Buildings in this style

*Top left:* Structure to the left, 1532 West Jackson, is built in the Romanesque revival style popularized by Richardson. The house to the right has many elements of the earlier Queen Anne style. (Barbara Crane, photographer)

*Center left:* Detail of the roof-lines of the 1500 block of Jackson reveals a great variety of flat and mansard roofs. Many of the roofs are punctuated by dormer windows and gables. (Barbara Crane, photographer)

*Bottom left:* This Queen Anne styled gable freely adapts classical details. (Barbara Crane, photographer)

*Below:* Wooden porch and high first floor entrance are typical of many on Jackson Boulevard. (Barbara Crane, photographer)



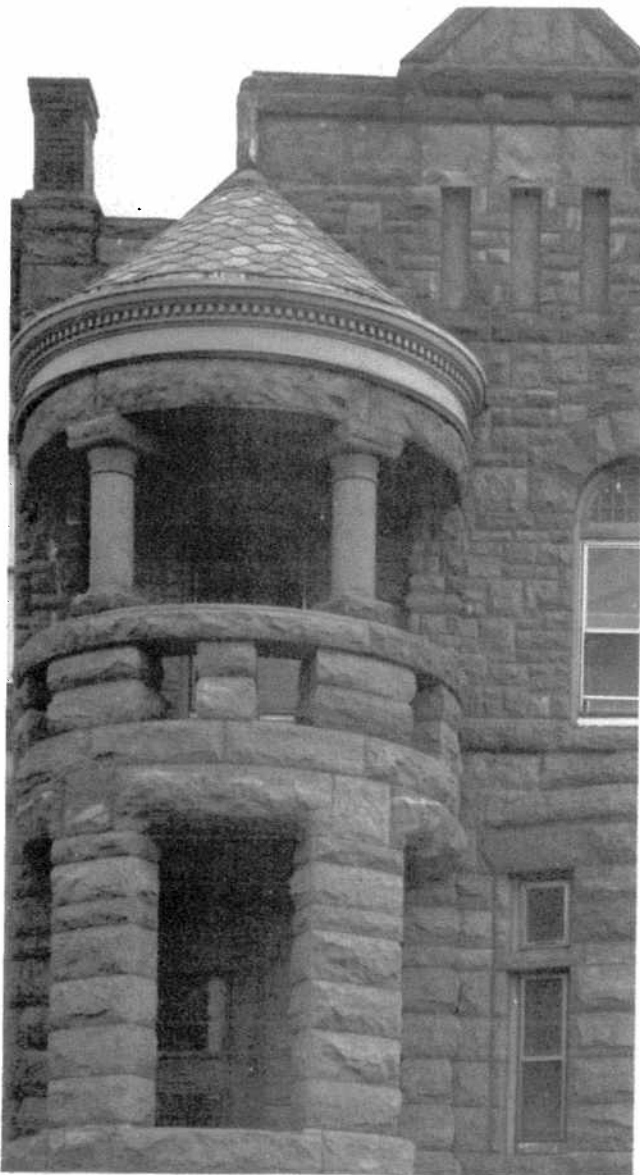
have a massive appearance. Richardson introduced this style to Chicago himself by designing three buildings in the city: The Marshall Field Wholesale Store (1884-87) and the Franklin MacVeagh House (1885-87), both demolished; and the J. J. Glessner House on Prairie Avenue (1886-87), which survives.

The last two structures built in the district, 1532 and 1539 West Jackson, are good examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

The distinctive architectural character of the district is, then, the result of a blend of four architectural styles popular in the latter part of the nineteenth century—the Italianate, Queen Anne, Second Empire, and Richardsonian Romanesque styles.

**The rusticated stone giving a massive appearance to the cylindrical porch and entrance to the building at 1539 West Jackson is typical of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.**

(Barbara Crane, photographer)



*The Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks was established in 1968 by city ordinance, and was given the responsibility of recommending to the City Council that specific landmarks be preserved and protected by law. The ordinance states that the Commission, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, can recommend any area, building, structure, work of art, or other object that has sufficient historical, community, or other aesthetic value. Once the City Council acts on the Commission's recommendation and designates a Chicago Landmark, the ordinance provides for the preservation, protection, enhancement, rehabilitation, and perpetuation of that landmark. The Commission assists by carefully reviewing all applications for building permits pertaining to designated Chicago Landmarks. This insures that any proposed alteration does not detract from those qualities that caused the landmark to be designated.*

*The Commission makes its recommendations to the City Council only after extensive study. As part of this study, the Commission staff prepares detailed documentation on each potential landmark. This public information brochure is a synopsis of various research materials compiled as part of the designation procedure.*